



*RI Department of Education
in Collaboration with the
RI Department of Health*

Tobacco Use Health Risks Among Rhode Island Public High School Students 1997 and 2001

This summary presents selected information on tobacco use behaviors that affect health risks among Rhode Island adolescents, based on results from the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in over 50 participating states, territories, and municipalities nationwide. The YRBS was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury, and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 and 2001 the YRBS was administered to 1,528 and 1,396 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students, respectively, in grades 9 through 12. With response rates of 60% in 1997 and 63% in 2001, the results are representative of all public high school students statewide. Survey findings from both years can be used to make important inferences concerning health-risk behaviors within this population.

For additional information contact Donald Perry, Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-7628 or Linda Nightingale Greenwood, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2364.

KEY FINDINGS

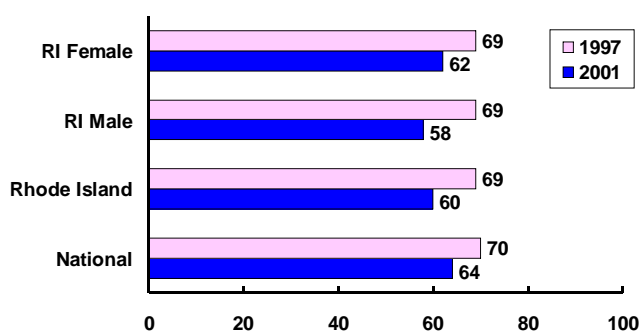
- ✓ In the 2001 survey, 60% of Rhode Island students reported that they had tried cigarettes at some point in their life, as compared to 69% in 1997. This figure was consistent with the national rate and showed little variation between male and female students.
 - ✓ In contrast, 25% of Rhode Island students were current smokers in 2001, having smoked cigarettes on one or more of the past 30 days. This represents a significant decrease from the 35% reported in 1997, and a decrease that was shared by both male and female students. Smoking was seen to increase with grade level, with 31% of 12th graders being current smokers in 2001 as compared to 22% among 9th and 10th graders in Rhode Island.
 - ✓ 14% of Rhode Island students were frequent smokers in 2001, smoking 20 or more days out of the 30 days prior to the survey. There was no major difference in the rate of frequent smoking by males versus females. 50% of current male smokers among students in Rhode Island had tried to quit smoking at some point during the past 12 months as compared to 62% of their female counterparts.
 - ✓ 6% of Rhode Island male students reported using chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the 30 days preceding the 2001 survey, compared to 10% in 1997. In both survey periods, only 2% of females reported this type of tobacco use. In 2001, 22% of male students and only 6% of female students in Rhode Island reported smoking cigars, cigarillos or little cigars at least once in the 30 days prior to the survey. 29% of Rhode Island students reported using some type of tobacco product (cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, or cigars) over the previous 30 days, as compared to 34% nationally.
 - ✓ In 2001, 22% of students in both Rhode Island and the nation reported having their first cigarette before age 13. The percentage was the same for Rhode Island males as for females, which also represented a slight decline for males between 1997 and 2001.
 - ✓ In 2001, almost 3 out of 10 of Rhode Island students who were current smokers under age 18 were able to buy cigarettes in a store or gas station in the past 30 days. A much greater proportion of Rhode Island males than females obtained cigarettes in this manner (38% versus 28%). 14% of Rhode Island students in 2001, males and females alike, had smoked on school property during the previous 30 days in 2001, down substantially from 20% in 1997.
-

Tobacco Use

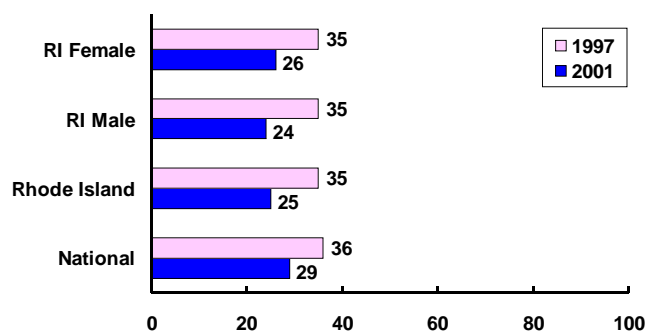
Risk Behavior: Cigarette Smoking

Rationale: Tobacco use is considered the chief preventable cause of death in the United States with approximately one fifth of all deaths attributable to tobacco use. Cigarette smoking is responsible for heart disease; cancers of the lung, larynx, mouth, esophagus, and bladder; stroke; and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In addition, cigarette smokers are more likely to drink alcohol and use marijuana and cocaine as compared to non-smokers. If current patterns of smoking behavior persist, an estimated 5 million U.S. persons who were under the age of 18 in 1995 could die prematurely from smoking-related illnesses.

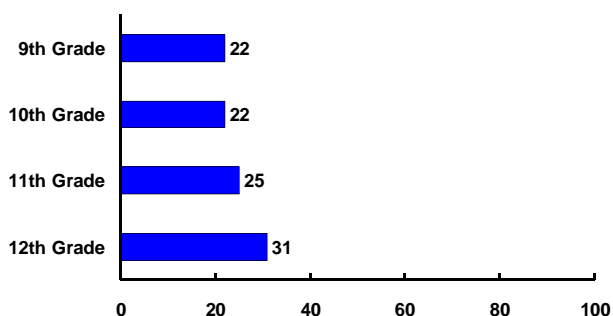
Percentage of students who ever tried smoking cigarettes



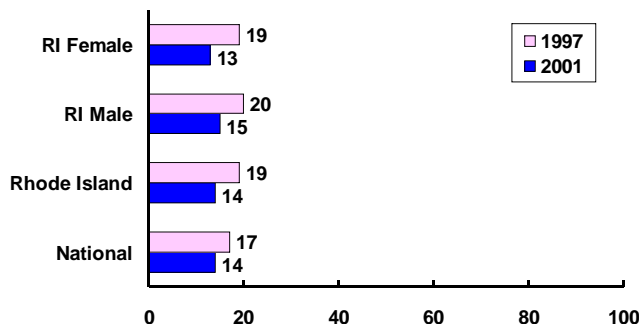
Current smokers - percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey



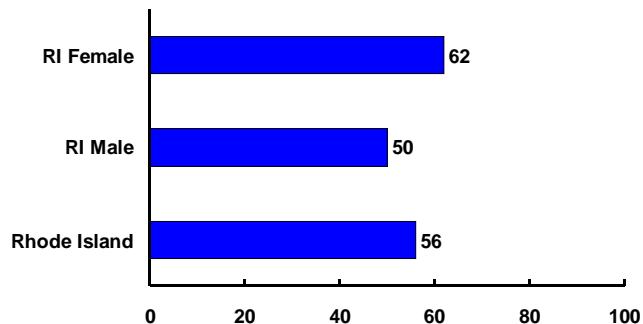
Current smokers - percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey – by grade – 2001 YRBS



Frequent smokers - percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on 20 or more of the past 30 days



Percentage of students who were current smokers and have tried to quit smoking during the past 12 months – 2001 YRBS

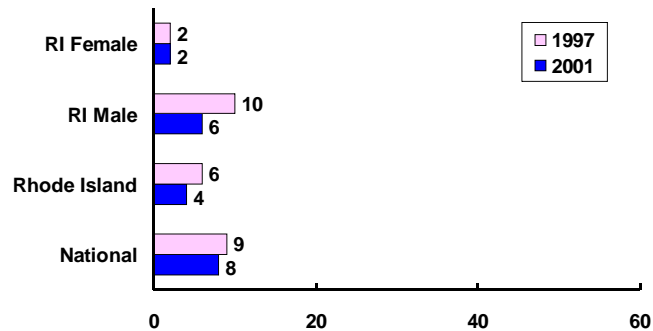


Tobacco Use

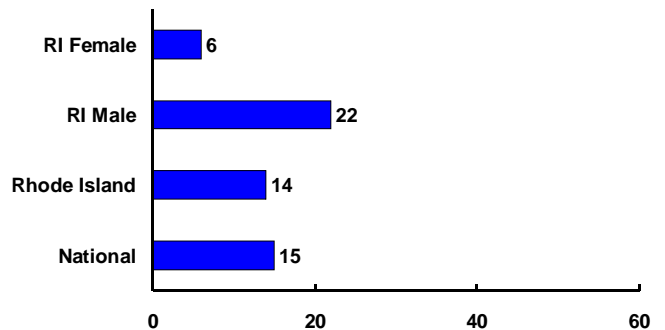
Risk Behavior: Smokeless tobacco and other tobacco use

Rationale: Smokeless tobacco use primarily begins in early adolescence. Nationally, approximately 75% of oral cavity and pharyngeal cancers are attributed to the use of smoked and smokeless tobacco. Cigar smoking also has been associated with cancers of the oral cavity, larynx, esophagus, and lung.

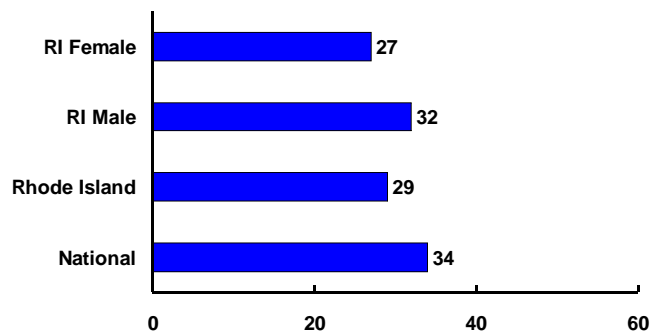
Percentage of students who used chewing tobacco or snuff on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey



Percentage of students who smoked cigars, cigarillos or little cigars on one or more of past 30 days – 2001 YRBS



Percentage of students who used any tobacco during the past 30 days* – 2001 YRBS



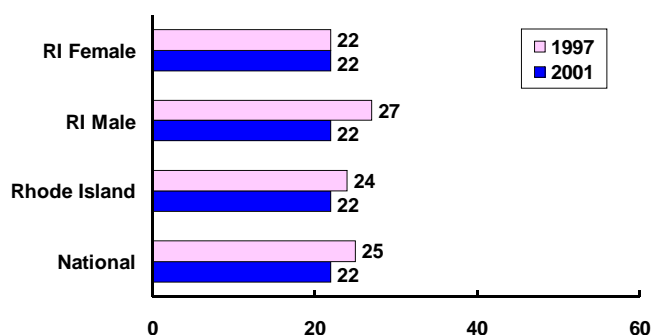
*Smoked cigarettes or cigars or used chewing tobacco, snuff or dip on 1+ of the 30 days preceding the survey

Tobacco Use

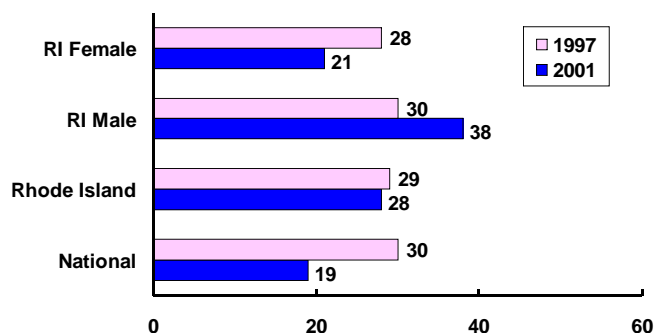
Risk Behavior: Age of initiation, access to tobacco products, and use on school property.

Rationale: The age when young people first start using alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs is a predictor of later alcohol and drug problems, especially if use begins before age 15. For both cigarette and alcohol use, the greatest risk factors among youths are frequent problems with school work and the number of friends who either smoke or drink regularly.¹

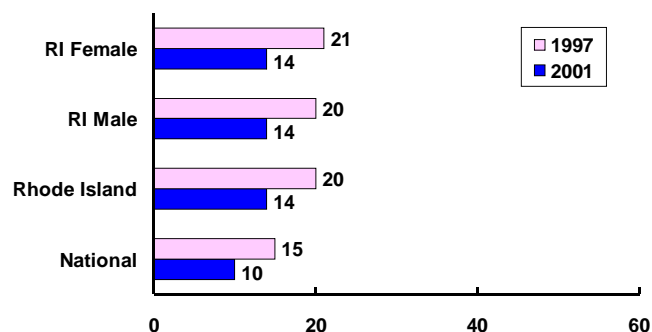
Percentage of students who smoked a whole cigarette for the first time before age 13



Percentage of students who usually got their own cigarettes by buying them in a store or gas station during the past 30 days



Percentage of students who smoked cigarettes on school property on one or more of the 30 days preceding the survey



¹ 2003 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Factbook, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, Providence, RI ©2003 Rhode Island KIDS COUNT, page 66.